Government's Reaction on George Speight Statement

2711. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reported statement of the Fizi nationalist rebel leader George Speight to the effect that he was looking to India for help and support in the interest of a large ethnic Indian minority;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to ensure that there should be equal rights to all Fijians and that the new Constitution of Fiji should guarantee racial and ethnic equality?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, the statement has been noted. George Speight, however, did not say that he will seek India's assistance for the benefit of the ethnic Indian minority. On the contrary, he stated that he would like to learn from India about the special constitutional provision that have been made for the benefit of our "natives". As George Speight is now under detention and he has no say in the Interim Civilian Government (ICG) of Fiji the question of GOI's reaction to any Statement from him does not arise.

(c) The Government of India has raised its voice wherever possible bilaterally and in multilateral fora to restore democracy and the rule of law in Fiji and promote equal rights for all Fijians. Not only our diplomatic missions, but even PM and EAM have been in personal touch with their counterparts in Australia, United Kingdom or New Zealand, on the crisis. At the Senior Officials meeting of the Commonwealth High Level Review Group in Pretoria on 25-26 July, 2000, the situation in Fiji was the focus of India's Statement.

In all our interventions in bilateral and multilateral fora, India's effort is on resumption of democratic processes and restoration of the lawfully constituted Government and racial harmony in Fiji. In our opinion, the 1997 Constitution of Fiji provided an appropriate framework for these ends.